The Moscow Times
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Oil Spill Washes Up on Russia's Black Sea Coast After Storm Hits Aging Tankers

December 17, 2024



Social media

Globs and puddles of oil have begun washing up on southern Russia's Black Sea coast two days after Russian-flagged tanker ships were damaged in a storm, regional authorities said Tuesday.

"Oil products were washed ashore across several dozen kilometers," Veniamin Kondratyev, governor of southern Russia's Krasnodar region, wrote on Telegram.

Videos shared on social media showed beaches in and around the resort city of Anapa stained by oil splotches. Some of the videos showed birds covered in oil struggling to take flight.

"I tried letting one dry in the sun, but you have to wash off the [oil] feather by feather," one woman told state media in an interview.

Embed:

Russian state media estimated that more than 3,000 metric tons of oil may have leaked into the Kerch Strait after a storm ripped the Volgoneft 212 tanker in half and ran Volgoneft 239 aground on Sunday. One crew member died from hypothermia while 26 were saved from both tankers.

Together, the tankers were carrying around 9,000 metric tons of mazut, a low-grade heavy fuel oil used in power plants in the former Soviet Union, an unnamed emergency official told the state-run news agency TASS earlier. Media reported that both vessels were more than 50 years old.

Greenpeace Ukraine warned that the spill could cause an environmental catastrophe in the region that connects the Black and Azov seas near Russia-annexed Crimea.

Governor Kondratyev shared images and a video showing Emergency Situations Ministry crews performing cleanup work on the beaches of Anapa and Temryuksky districts south of the Kerch Strait where the storm damaged the tankers. He said 267 people and 50 pieces of equipment have been deployed for disaster relief.

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